

## TWO SEALS OF SYMEON METAPHRASTES

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THE Dumbarton Oaks Collection possesses two seals that can safely be attributed to Symeon Metaphrastes, the well-known imperial official, scholar, and hagiographer of the tenth century. Al-

though they do not provide any new information concerning Symeon, they are deserving of this brief note, since they were made for a famous man who has been the subject of long discussions among Byzantinists.

A) Dumbarton Oaks Seal Collection, acquisition number 58.106.3455 (figs. 1a-d)

Lead seal; diam.: 24 mm. Broken along the channel of the string; part of the inscription has remained out of the field (left margin), while several letters have not been properly printed (right side).

*Obv.* The field is divided by four diameters into eight equal parts decorated with dots. On the circumference, two letters are inscribed in each part, forming the following inscription: KE - BO - HE - EI - TΩ - <CΩ - ΔO - VΛ,>: Κ(ύρι)ε βοήθει τῷ <σῷ δούλ(ω)>.

*Rev.* Inscription:

—•—  
CVMΕ  
ΩΝΜΑΓ.  
ΤΡΟΣΛ.  
ΟΘΕΤ,Τ.  
ΔΡΟΜ.

—•—  
<+> Συμε-  
ών μαγ[ι]-  
<σ>τρο (καί) λ[ο]-  
<γ>οθέτ(η) τ[οῦ]  
δρόμ[ου]

+ Συμεών μαγίστρω καὶ λογοθέτῃ τοῦ δρόμου.

B) Dumbarton Oaks Seal Collection, acquisition number 58.106.1592 (figs. 2a-d)

Lead seal; diam.: 25 mm.; field: 23 mm. Broken; one third is lost.

*Obv.* Same design as on the preceding seal, but the decorative dots are disposed somewhat differently. Inscription: KE - <BO - HE - EI - TΩ - C>Ω - ΔO - VΛ': Κ(ύρι)ε <βοήθει τῷ σ>ῷ δούλ(ω).

*Rev.* Inscription:

CVMΕ  
ΜΑΓΙCΤ  
ΑΙΛΟΓΟ  
—ΤΗΤδ  
ΟΜδ

<+> Συμε-  
<ών> μαγίστ-  
<ρ(ω) κ>αὶ λογο-  
<θέ>τῃ τοῦ  
<δρ>όμου

+ Συμεών μαγίστρω καὶ λογοθέτῃ τοῦ δρόμου.

It is obvious that both seals belong to the same person, and have been produced by two (successive?) *boullōtēria*. Judging by stylistic criteria, both can be dated in the second half of the tenth century. The epigraphic character of the first seems to me more "archaic," and this is why I am publishing them in this order; although I ac-

knowledge in advance the fragility and the lack of importance of this assumption.

I do not think that there can be any serious doubt about the owner of the two seals: Symeon Metaphrastes was, in fact, a magister and logothete of the *dromos* in the second half of the tenth century. His career is by now rather well investigated, partic-

ularly after the publication of some new material by I. Ševčenko.<sup>1</sup>

Symeon was patrician and *protoasecretis* at the time of the death of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (9 November 959); one may assume that he held this title and office for some time before 959, but there cannot be any certainty as to when he obtained them.<sup>2</sup> He is still mentioned as

<sup>1</sup> I. Ševčenko, "Poems on the Deaths of Leo VI and Constantine VII in the Madrid Manuscript of Scylitzes," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 23–24 (1969–70), 187–227, particularly 210f. (with earlier bibliography).

<sup>2</sup> Symeon's biography in the first part of the tenth century is very complicated because of several contradictory data and a possible homonymy. a) A Symeon *protoasecretis* is mentioned between the years 923 and 930 (Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando Imperio*, ed. Gy. Moravcsik and trans. R. J. H. Jenkins, 2nd edition [Washington, D. C., 1967], chap. 46, line 68; *Commentary*, II [London, 1962], 180, and, for the date, 179); if we admit that this Symeon *protoasecretis* is identical with the Symeon mentioned with this title in 959 (at least down to 968, cf. *infra*), it would follow that Symeon held this office for at least thirty-eight years—and this is unlikely. b) In 904 we hear of an *asecretis* Symeon, who accomplished important diplomatic missions and who, later, became patrician and *protoasecretis* (Theophanes Continuatus [Bonn], 368; Symeon Magister [Bonn], 707–8; Georgius Monachus [Bonn], 863; Leo Grammaticus [Bonn], 277; Cedrenus, II [Bonn], 263; Johannes Cameniates [Bonn], 574–76; "Vita Euthymii," ed. P. Karlin-Hayter, *Byzantion*, 25–27 [1955–57], 92, 106f.; a Symeon *asecretis* is also mentioned in an early tenth-century correspondence: 'Επετηρίς 'Εταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν, 27 [1957], 210–11, cf. R. Browning, in *Byzantion*, 24 [1954], 431). It is very unlikely that this Symeon, who was an experienced official already by 904 (Ioannes Cameniates [Bonn], 574), is identical with the Metaphrastes who lived and was active at least until 987 (see *infra*), at which date the Symeon of the year 904 would have been over one hundred years old. Consequently, I would rather identify the *asecretis* of 904 with the *protoasecretis* mentioned between 923 and 930, and distinguish this Symeon from the Metaphrastes who appears as a *protoasecretis* some thirty years later. This distinction, however, has its weak points too, since a) we hear that Symeon Metaphrastes was born under the reign of Leo VI, between the years 886 and 912; and b) we have three poems, mourning the death of this Emperor, most probably written in 912, which have important stylistic similarities

patrician and *protoasecretis* under the reign of Romanus II (959–963); he was a member of the council of regency (together with Joseph Bringas) during the period March–August 963;<sup>3</sup> he retained his title and office under the reign of Nicephorus Phokas, namely in 964 and 967, and is mentioned as a *protoasecretis*, for the last time, on 29 June 968.<sup>4</sup>

During the reign of John Tzimiskes, in 975, we hear of a Symeon magister and logothete. It is obvious that Symeon in the meantime—probably just after John Tzimiskes' accession to the throne—had obtained a promotion in the hierarchy of titles and became magister. One text mentions

with other Metaphrastes' poems: see the discussion of this problem by Ševčenko, *op. cit.*, 222f. I cannot establish any relation between the Metaphrastes and a certain κύρ Συμεών, whose brother Joseph died very young in the tenth century (Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων, 16 [1922], 52–53).

<sup>3</sup> Epitome of the Chronicle of Symeon Logothete, in *cod. Vatic. gr.* 163, fol. 61v; extract published by Hase in his commentary to the edition of Leo the Deacon (Bonn), 427. This text has not been taken into consideration by Aikaterine Christophilopoulou, 'Ἡ ἀντιβασιλεία εἰς τὸ Βυζάντιον, in Σύμμεκτα, 2 (1970), 62–64.

<sup>4</sup> Texts cited by Ševčenko, *op. cit.*, 216. See also *infra*, note 7. F. Dölger, "Der Kodikellus des Christodoulos in Palermo," in *Byzantinische Diplomatie* (Ettal, 1956), 63 note 294, mentions, under the year 964, a *protoasecretis* by the name of "Johannes Sampadopoulos." This information comes from a document of the Patriarch Polyeuktos issued in 964 or 966 (the indiction does not correspond to the year of the document) in favor of a certain John Lampardopoulos, the founder of the monastery τοῦ Φιλοσόφου, near Dimitsana: F. Miklosich and I. Müller eds., *Acta et diplomata Graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*, V (Vienna, 1887), 250–52; reedited with commentary by T. Gritsopoulos, in 'Επετ. Ἐτ. Βυζ. Σπ., 26 (1956), 198–211. The authenticity of this document is doubtful (see V. Grumel, *Les registres des actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople*, I, fasc. 2 [Istanbul, 1936], no. 791, Critique; inaccuracy of the dating; patriarchal signature formulated according to the usage established since the end of the eleventh cent.), and consequently its testimony cannot be taken into consideration. Symeon's successor in the post of *protoasecretis* was a certain Stylianos, whose death was mourned by the Metaphrastes in a poem partly published by S. G. Mercati, in *Analecta Bollandiana*, 68 (1950), 129.

Symeon as a logothete of the *stratiōtikon*,<sup>5</sup> he probably held this post for a rather short period, since writers of a later date know him as a logothete of the *dromos*.<sup>6</sup>

The last promotions in Symeon's *cursus honorum* cannot be dated with accuracy. It is certain only that he did not become a logothete of the *dromos* under Nicephorus Phokas—in 968 this office was held by Leo Phokas and in 969 by John Tzimiskes<sup>7</sup>—and that, after being for a short time a logothete of the *stratiōtikon*, he became logothete of the *dromos* and held this office for a long time, most probably until his death (Nicephorus Ouranos' dirge for Symeon mentions him as a logothete of the *dromos*).

Symeon died on a 28 November; but the year is unknown. Certainly he served as logothete of the *dromos* under the Emperor Basil II (976–1025).<sup>8</sup> Yahya ibn-Said states clearly that Symeon "secretary and logothete" became famous for his hagiographic works in the fourth year of Basil II's reign, when Nicholas Chrysoberges became patriarch of Constantinople—that is, in 980.<sup>9</sup> A Georgian writer of the tenth century, Ephrem,

places the hagiographic activity of Symeon under the reign of Basil II, around 982.<sup>10</sup>

This is the last dated mention of Symeon as a living person. Indirect evidence, however, invites us to postpone by at least five years the date of his death, for we know that Nicephorus Ouranos composed a dirge on his friend's death, obviously very shortly after the event.<sup>11</sup> But we also know that Nicephorus Ouranos, who by 979 was already Basil II's secretary and bore the title of *vestes*, had been sent to Baghdad in 979 in order to obtain the extradition of the defeated rebel Bardas Skleros, was imprisoned there by Adhoud ad-Daoulah for at least eight years, and finally managed to escape and return to Constantinople shortly after the escape of Bardas Skleros, which took place in 987. It is apparent, then, that Ouranos returned in 987 at the earliest; and he obviously wrote his poem after his return. Thus, Symeon's death must be placed after 987.<sup>12</sup> Taking into consideration the assertion of Markos Eugenikos that Symeon was born under the reign of Leo VI (d. 912),<sup>13</sup> one may assume that he did not live long after 987.

This short biographical sketch permits us to suggest an appropriate dating for our seals: they probably were struck in the seventies or eighties of the tenth century.

One last, tentative hypothesis: the decoration of the obverse of both seals, although not unique, is rare; it can be found, with some variants, on some seals dating from the tenth century.<sup>14</sup> This decoration could be a combination of two crosses, a regular Greek cross and a Saint Andrew cross. But its enrichment with dots reminds me also of certain astrological symbols, particularly the symbols of certain "decans,"<sup>15</sup> con-

<sup>5</sup> See Ševčenko, *op. cit.*, 216 and note 38; 218–20. In Symeon's correspondence, which is preserved with letters of other authors, there is a letter, written by a patriarch (?), which may have been addressed to a logothete of the *stratiōtikon*. The author intercedes with the addressee in favor of a poor widow, obviously holding military land, whose son was urged, although poor, to join the army; the object of the letter is to obtain the exemption of the military service for the son.

<sup>6</sup> Texts cited by Ševčenko, *op. cit.*, 217; see also *cod. Vat. gr. 1598 (olim 1512)*, fol. 132v, in C. Giannelli, *Codices Vaticani graeci (codices 1485–1683)* (Vatican City, 1950), 233.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. R. Guiland, "Les logothètes," *Revue des Etudes Byzantines*, 29 (1971), 55 (John Tzimiskes). Leo Phokas (omitted by Guiland) is mentioned as logothete of the *dromos* by Liutprand of Cremona (*Legatio*, ed. with Leo the Deacon [Bonn], 349).

<sup>8</sup> See Symeon's *Synaxarium* by Markos Eugenikos (d. 1445), in A. Papadopoulos Kera-meus, *Μαυρογορδάτειος Βιβλιοθήκη* (Constantinople, 1886), 100–1.

<sup>9</sup> *Histoire de Yahya-ibn-Sa'id d'Antioche*, ed. and trans. I. Krachkovsky and A. Vasiliev, II (Patrologia Orientalis, 23,3 [1932], 402); for the dates of the patriarchate of Nicholas Chrysoberges, see V. Grumel, "Chronologie patriarcale au Xe siècle," *REB*, 22 (1964), 45–71, 253–54.

<sup>10</sup> *AnalBoll*, 29 (1910), 358.

<sup>11</sup> Ed. S. G. Mercati, "Versi di Niceforo Uranos in morte di Simeone Metafraste," *AnalBoll*, 68 (1950) 130–32.

<sup>12</sup> For Nicephorus Ouranos's adventures, see Cedrenus, II (Bonn), 433, 449; *Histoire de Yahya*, 400, 401, 402, 420, 421.

<sup>13</sup> *Μαυρογορδάτειος Βιβλιοθήκη*, 100.

<sup>14</sup> Cf., e.g., V. Laurent, *Le Corpus des sceaux de l'Empire byzantin*, V, Plates (Paris, 1965), nos. 52, 225, 431, 1374; unpublished seals of the Dumbarton Oaks collection Nos. 55.1.3574, 55.2.3575, and 58.106.1937.

<sup>15</sup> The "decans" are the thirds of the zodiac signs. See W. Gundel, *Dehane and Dekansterne*.

sidered to have healing or protective qualities, some of which are rather similar to the decoration of Symeon's seals.<sup>16</sup> Of course,

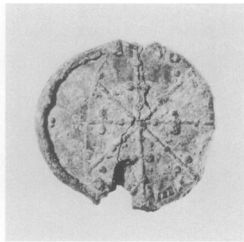
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*bilder* (Glückstadt-Hamburg, 1936); and the article "Dekane" by the same author, in Pauly-Wissowa, *Realenzyklopädie*, Suppl. VII (Stuttgart, 1940), cols. 116–23.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Catalogus codicum astrologorum graecorum*, VI, *Codices Vindobonenses*, descr. G. Kroll (Brussels, 1903), 74, Symbols nos. 5, 10, 21; corresponding texts, *ibid.*, 73, 75, 76; cf. also J. B. Pitra, *Analecta sacra et classica spicilegio solesmensi parata*, V (Paris-Rome, 1888), 286, 287, 288. Same symbol in *Catal. cod. astrol. gr.*, XII, *Codices Rossicos*, descr. M. A. F. Šangin (Brussels, 1936), 40–41 and pl. iv.

there is no way to prove this hypothesis. I formulate it only because we know that Symeon Metaphrastes was, in fact, considered one of the best authorities in Constantinople in regard to the astrological interpretation of physical phenomena.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Leo the Deacon (Bonn), 168, 169. The commentary of this text by N. Tomadakes (Εἰς Συμμεῶνα τὸν Μεταφραστήν, in Ἑπετ. Ἑτ. Βυλ. Σπ., 23 [1953], 131–32), is by no means successful; see N. Panagiotakes, *Λέων ὁ Διάκονος* (Athens, 1965), 14.

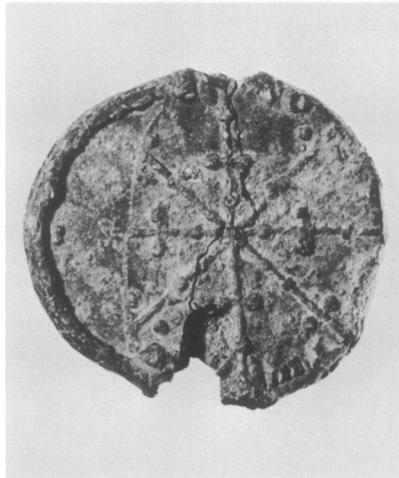


a. Obverse



b. Reverse

Actual Size



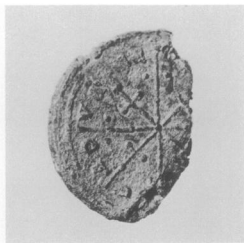
c.



d.

Twice Actual Size

1. Seal Number D. O. 58.106.3455



a. Obverse



b. Reverse

Actual Size



c.



d.

Twice Actual Size

2. Seal Number D. O. 58.106.1592